

FACT SHEET ON CUTANEOUS ANTHRAX

What is cutaneous anthrax?

An uncommon cutaneous (skin) infection due to a bacterium (*Bacillus anthracis*) that is found in the environment and typically causes illness in animals. Cutaneous (skin) anthrax is marked by a boil-like lesion that eventually forms an ulcer with a black center.

How is cutaneous anthrax contracted?

The infection occurs when the bacteria enter a cut or scratch in the skin. Most cutaneous anthrax infections occur when people touch animal products (like wool, bone, hair, and hide) that come from an animal that died of anthrax.

Can cutaneous anthrax be spread from person to person?

If you develop cutaneous anthrax, the drainage from the open sore presents a low risk of infection to others. The only way cutaneous anthrax can be transmitted is by direct contact with the drainage from an open sore. Cutaneous anthrax is not spread from person to person by casual contact, sharing office space, or by coughing and sneezing.

How is cutaneous anthrax treated?

The cutaneous form of anthrax responds well to several antibiotics. The United States has a large supply of these antibiotics and can quickly manufacture more if needed. With treatment, complete recovery from cutaneous anthrax is usual.

How is cutaneous anthrax diagnosed?

Cutaneous anthrax is diagnosed when the *Bacillus anthracis* bacterium is found in the skin lesion by a laboratory culture. It can also be diagnosed by measuring specific antibodies in the blood of persons who are suspected of having infection.

Can I die from cutaneous anthrax?

Cutaneous anthrax is not usually fatal. If treated with appropriate antibiotics, most individuals make a full recovery.